



CERTIFICATE of RECOGNITION

By virtue of the authority vested by the Constitution in the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, there is hereby officially recognized:

VIRGINIA OYSTER HERITAGE PROGRAM

WHEREAS, in Virginia's coastal waters along the Atlantic Ocean and the Chesapeake Bay, the oyster is an important species that constructs reefs which provide habitat for many species of finfish and shellfish, filters both algae and sediments from the water, thereby improving water quality and increasing light penetration and enhancing seagrass growth, and provides direct economic benefit to tidewater communities; and

WHEREAS, oyster populations have been severely depleted by harvesting, habitat loss, and disease, and therefore the habitat, water quality, and economic benefits of thriving oyster populations have been lost, to the detriment of Virginia's coastal ecosystems; and

WHEREAS, oyster restoration efforts have increased the number of oysters in small rivers such as the Piankatank, the Wicomico, the Lafayette and the Elizabeth, through three-dimensional reef restoration, aquaculture, improved fishery management and outreach and education efforts; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Environmental Quality's Virginia Coastal Program has brought together a partnership of Virginia state agencies, federal agencies, nonprofit organizations and business groups that have agreed to work together and commit their support for a large-scale oyster restoration effort; and

WHEREAS, this partnership, through oyster restoration efforts, will improve water quality, increase marine bio-diversity and fish habitat and create a sustainable fishery;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, James S. Gilmore, III, do hereby recognize **THE OYSTER HERITAGE PROGRAM** in the **COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA**, and I call this observance to the attention of all our citizens.




Governor


Secretary of the Commonwealth